

# The World of Foreign Books

## GERMAN BOOKS.

Surveyed by ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.

*The Germans and Shakespeare—Literature and the Sex Instinct—Fechter's "Hauptmann"—Poetry about Poets.*

THE most implacable foe of all things German is forced to admit that German scholarship ranks high. It is, however, impossible for any one, foe or friend, entirely to acquit German scholarship of the charge of intolerance. A new case in point is entwined about the names of Goethe and Shakespeare. Five years ago Georg Brandes published his "Wolfgang Goethe." Eight months ago the German translation was published in Berlin. H. A. Korff reviews the book in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of October 3. After winding around through four broad columns, modifying a bit of praise with an adversative observation, or the opposite, Korff says in conclusion: "The European Brandes has in truth rightly interpreted the European Goethe, and there is such a one. But then there is another Goethe, the German Goethe, and this Goethe neither Brandes nor any other non-German can rightly understand or appreciate." Yet the Germans know that they appreciate Shakespeare. It is an unshakable belief in which they take titanic pride. They remark, in season and out of season, that where Shakespeare is played once in the United Kingdom he is played many, many times in Germany. They boast of their numerous translations and budge with delight at their countless investigations. Shakespeare, they exclaim, is ours, for we understand him.

It is an intolerant attitude, and particularly so since Goethe would have been the last man to intimate that Shakespeare was his inferior. And, unfortunately, there is a remnant of this attitude in Alfred Steinitzer's otherwise good book entitled "Shakespeare's Königsdramen" (Shakespeare's Historical Plays). What Steinitzer has done is to take the dramas that Shakespeare wrote on the kings of England—John, the Heirys and Richards—and fill 348 tall pages with statements showing the extent to which Shakespeare did or did not know English history and immortalize it with accuracy in his iambic pentameters.

This is a good book. As a piece of scholarship it must take high rank. To write it infinite search was necessary; much poking about in rare tomes and still rarer manuscripts, which of themselves are not interesting. Those who wish to get the historical setting in any of Shakespeare's English historical dramas can get it here. The volume contains, moreover, thirty-seven full page illustrations that are a joy to look upon; five "battle maps" that would rejoice the heart of a field marshal; and fourteen genealogical tables which cultivators of the Mayflower ideal may study with reassurance.

Who can refute the book? I cannot. The records are quoted and it is not merely fair but decent and obligatory to regard the German translations of them as quite accurate. Each one of these dozen plays is taken up, scene by scene, and where Shakespeare came within reasonable contiguity to the historical truth he is given credit for it; and where he was fanciful, and that only, the fact is set down, not merely without malice but in a tone of unqualified approval. Steinitzer says in his last paragraph that "we cannot help but envy the nation which has the greatest national epopee known to the world. Shakespeare's historical dramas constitute a secular bible for the English people and in this sense he is the greatest historian that has ever revealed himself through the medium of poetry."

And yet, try as we may, it is hard not to see back of this most useful study a shade of that intolerance which claims and proclaims superiority. Hard not to

see, for Steinitzer says in so many words that the "introductions" to the various Shakespearean historical plays are so thin as to tear if looked at—let Shakespeare editors take note—contends that Th. P. Courtenay's "Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakespeare" (1840) are of but little value, none indeed from his point of view, wonders why no one has had the ingenuity and enterprise to do this bit of research before, and then launches out on his theme, telling us all about "Hans" Cade, not "Jack," and "Johann, Herzog von Bedford," not "John, Duke of Bedford." But these German forms may well be overlooked. This book was written by a student of A. W. Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck and published by C. H. Beck of Munich. It is in other words a German book. And Steinitzer's query as to the cause of its belated appearance is well taken.

Space remains only to say that Steinitzer's thesis is that it would be a rare case if Shakespeare had dramatized historical truth. His main "authority," Hollinshed, was a "diligent but rather uncritical compiler, a man who copied other chroniclers"—Edward Hall, for example—and who was quite without independent judgment." But is this to be regretted? Had Shakespeare been able to go to reliable sources, would he, to take a single illustration, have made great poetry out of the development of parliamentary government in England? Would he have hamletized on the glories of the Magna Charta instead of ignoring it? Hardly. Steinitzer has made an intelligent approach to Shakespeare's historical plays easier, which is a real service.

### Literature and the Sex Instinct.

August Strindberg said once: "The modern man has forgotten the First Commandment; he has made woman his God." Turn German scholarship loose on that theme and an exceptional book will be the outcome. Such is the latest volume from the pen of Paul Kluckhohn, professor at the University of Münster, in Westphalia. His study is written under the chatty rubric "Die Auffassung der Liebe in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts und in der deutschen Romantik." A quite adequate translation of this title would be: "The Sexual Instinct as Revealed in Literature from Plato to Rachel." That is, not Rachel the wife of Jacob, nor Rachel the French actress, but Rachel (1771-1833) the wife of Varnhagen von Ense, the Rachel, or Rahel, on whom Ellen Key wrote that splendid book, which was translated from the Swedish by Arthur G. Chater, published (1913) by G. P. Putnam's Sons, and is still out in that good firm's warehouse at New Rochelle unread, unhonored and unsold.

This investigation represents German scholarship from the point of view of the traditional thoroughness. There are nine chapters, the first four of which (pages 1 to 223; there are 640 pages in the book) are merely introductory. They lead up to the subject. They show how Plato, Luther, Voltaire, Swift, Pope and Milton, Wieland, Goethe, Mme. de Staël and certainly a hundred other important folk felt about love. There is no page without its footnote, no paragraph of text without its citation, no chapter without the contention that if the world will only understand man's relation to woman, and the reverse, life and letters will both be immensely enriched.

Well, some will smirk at the wisdom of the professor who saw fit to spend eleven years studying this subject, and who was obliged to commandeer 225,000 words in order to express himself. But the attitude is unreasoned. Love, ranging anywhere from First Corinthians, xiii, 13, to Martin Luther, who denounced celibacy among the priests and said that "men must marry in order to put a check on this here whoring," was the outstanding theme with the writers whom Kluckhohn has treated. Literature is the artistic visualization and faithful reflection of life. And if we wish to see why Novallis wrote "Heinrich von Ofterdingen," or Friedrich Schlegel "Lucinde," or Prevost "Manon Lescaut," or Smollet "Peregrine Pickle," as he did, it is necessary to do precisely what Kluckhohn has done: To study the customs and morals of the age in which the works were written, never overlooking the source on which

their authors drew and the disciples they created.

There may be such, though I can recall no case in which an English or American student has gone into a theme of this kind with equal care. And in view of the role that sex instinct plays at present in American letters, to say nothing of the emancipation of woman in 1922, it is an apposite book.

### Fechter's "Hauptmann."

So is Paul Fechter's "Gerhart Hauptmann" (Dresden: Sibyllen Verlag, 158 large pages). The publisher announces Fechter's work as "an expression of the gratitude of a new generation for the incalculable values (Werte) Hauptmann's genius has given us." Fechter himself speaks with less assurance. The last four lines of his biographical and critical study read: "Much that Hauptmann has done will perish and disappear; much has already disappeared. But in his best hours he has heard the stream of his age mutely swirling, vaguely swashing by, and has caught up as much of its melody as his senses could grasp and his soul feel, and the result of this remains."

Fechter emphasizes the fact that Hauptmann was born in a scientific and sociological age. This motivates his thesis: Hauptmann has given us much of life, but precious little of art. Nor is this all. He writes: "What does Hauptmann create, clarify, awaken, illuminate within us? Nearly nothing." That places a serious stricture on Germany's most prominent living writer.

Nor is this the only one. Fechter devotes an entire chapter to Hauptmann's exploitation of love. It is heavily written, as is each of the other nine. He lays it down as a fundamental principle that "the poet may use love, love that is of this earth, as an incitement, but he dare not use it as a theme." And this latter, Fechter claims, is what Hauptmann has done in every case except his purely historical dramas, such as "The Weavers" and "Florian Geyer." He writes: "Gerhart Hauptmann is, in the most literal sense of the word, the real eroticist of modern literature. He is this much more so than Frank Wedekind, who is poles removed from him; much more so than Richard Dehmel; much more so than any other writer." Fechter regrets this, finds, however, a crumb of comfort in Hauptmann's "Heretic of Soana." He contends that Hauptmann has no followers, and he devotes just four words to his sojourn in the United States: *Die Fahrt nach Amerika.*

German scholarship is not always philosophical; it may be merely practical, helpful. In this class falls Wilhelm Kosch's "Das deutsche Theater und Drama seit Schiller's Tod" (The German Theater and Drama since the Death of Schiller). This book appeared in its first form in 1913. At that time Kosch stated that the outlook for Germany was dark indeed; that the German people had become lax, soft, given up to pleasure, time wasting and time losing. He claimed that if anything could arouse the nation from its moral lassitude and spiritual torpor it would be a great historical drama that would hold up the mirror to human nature. Now he adds 108 pages to his first edition and expresses the wish that by the time the third edition will be necessary his hopes of nine years ago will have been realized. Kosch is a scholar, a gentleman and an optimist.

One of the most sensible chapters in the book is entitled "The Music Drama from Richard Wagner to Pfitzner." He claims, with Max Koch, that "Wagner is the greatest German dramatist next to Schiller and dominates, despite the opposition that has been his, because of the artist in him, the entire second half of the nineteenth century." That is strong language; but Wagner never has been done justice, certainly not in this country, as a creative writer, as a regular dramatist.

Kosch has treated the evolution of the German stage and German drama from Iffland (1759-1814) to the hordes of dramatists plying their trade around Easter, 1922, including Hermann Sudermann, who was then putting the last touches to his latest creation, "Like Them That Dream." It is a drama based on the 126th Psalm, treats a theme from the world war and was played for the first time the other day. Done with his textual matter, Kosch re-

cords (pages 287-331) the outstanding dramas of each year, by the year, from 1805, when not a single drama appeared in Germany that had enough power to coax a dog away from the fire, to 1922, which saw the completion of thirty-one dramas in which Kosch has a measure of faith. For the student of German literature during the period covered this is an indispensable manual.

And, finally, the Germans have from time almost immemorial been interested in a hybrid sort of scholarship that has manifested itself in the poetization of poets, using each term in its most elastic sense. In 1215 Gottfried von Strassburg wrote his "Trist und Isolte." In it he used other poets, such as Hartmann von Aue, Walther von der Vogelweide and Wolfram von Eschenbach, as "characters." Since then the Germans have written literally thousands of epic and dramatic works with poets as heroes or speaking personages.

Rudolf Krauss now edits a volume entitled "Schicksalstage deutscher Dichter" ("Red Letter Days in the Lives of German Poets"). It is a collection of eighteen short stories, each of which has a German poet as the hero. Kurt Martens, for example, contributes one story, entitled "E. T. A. Hoffmann: July 6, 1814." Will Vesper contributes another: "Goethe: November 24, 1823." Alfred Bock another: "Gottfried Keller: November 7, 1849."

### Poetry About Poets.

As I see literature there is much to be said for poetry based on poets. Take the case of Bock's "Gottfried Keller." It is a charming story he has told of how the young Keller was studying at Heidelberg and how one day that redoubtable old scholar Hermann Hettner was lecturing to him on the only way to write a short story—Hettner never wrote one and never could—and how Hettner interrupted his discourse on the short story to lecture Keller for his inattention. He accused his youthful protegee of having been out the night before. That was not the truth. Keller—he died a bachelor, and, according to Nietzsche, one of the greatest prose writers of his time—was then in love with Johanna Kapp. Whether she loved him was a question. He soon learned that the man she loved was Ludwig Feuerbach, to whom Keller owed so much. His heart was almost broken. But after receiving the final and declinatory letter from her he wandered around for a while, then went to his room and began to ponder on the significance of a beneficial misfortune that had befallen his coachman. This made him realize that life wounds, but also heals. Then he took down some sheets of white paper and began to write on his greatest novel—one of the greatest in the German-Swiss language—"Der Grune Heinrich."

Hermann Hettner was a literary historian; a critic. But he could not have related this incident in Gottfried Keller's life as effectively if he had devoted an entire book to it. These short stories, and all others like them, are literary criticism seen through a poetic temperament, just as Shakespeare's dramas are history evolved from the soul of genius.

German scholarship may rank high and go deep; it may be intolerant at times and merely useful or practical at others. But it is always many sided.

A big folio for small children is by George Randolph Chester and is called "The Wonderful Adventures of Little Prince Toofat" (McCann). The wide margins of the pages are decorated with drawings in line, and there are many fine full page pictures in color by Robert Lawson. The story is thoroughly fresh and amusing, with most astonishing creatures in it, and is told with a genuine understanding of what appeals to little folk. For that matter, lots of older persons will get huge delight out of its fantastic adventures and incredible incidents.

## TWO SHALL BE BORN

By Marie Conway Oemler  
Author of "Slippy McGee," etc.

The Boston Transcript says: "It is an exciting romance, full of humor, amusing situations and dramatic intensity." (Price \$1.90. Published by The Century Co., 353 Fourth Avenue, New York City.)

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